IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A process for preparing (meth)acrylic acid copolymers, which comprises the following process steps:

(1) free-radical polymerization of (meth)acrylic acid, a polymer I resulting, and

(2) amidation of the polymer I resulting from process step (1) by reaction with at least one aminoalkanesulfonic acid,

wherein the molar ratio of monomers in polymer I to aminoalkanesulfonic acid is from 15:1 to 2:1 and the (meth)acrylic acid copolymer comprises

(a) from 30 to 95% by weight of a poly(meth)acrylic acid basic framework,

(b) from 5 to 70% by weight of amide units based on aminoalkylsulfonic acids,

the total weight of the units in the sulfonated polymer being 100% by weight and all weights being based on the sulfonated polymer.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): [[A]] The process according to claim 1, wherein process step (1) is carried out at temperatures of from 100 to 200°C.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): [[A]] The process according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein process step (2) is carried out at temperatures from 140 to 250°C.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A (meth)acrylic acid copolymer which is obtainable by a process according to ~~claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1.

Claim 5 (Original): [[A]] The (meth)acrylic acid copolymer according to claim 4, wherein the weight-average molecular weight of the sulfonated polymer is from 1000 to 20 000 g/mol.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): A process for stabilizing phosphates and/or phosphonates and/or zinc ions in aqueous systems, which comprises adding to the system a polymer according to ~~claims 4 or 5~~ claim 4.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): ~~The use of~~ A method of using (meth)acrylic acid copolymers according to ~~claims 4 or 5~~ claim 4 for water treatment, scale inhibition in petroleum production and/or corrosion inhibition in aqueous systems.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): A formulation for water treatment, scale inhibition in petroleum production and/or corrosion inhibition, comprising (meth)acrylic acid copolymers according to ~~claims 4 or 5~~ claim 4.